



PUBLIC SEMINAR

The National Europe Centre at The Australian National University is pleased to invite you to:

The Dardanelles Syndrome and the Origins of the Cold War

Dr Bruce Kent, Distinguished Visiting Fellow,
National Europe Centre

Wednesday 31 May 2006, 12.30pm–1.30pm, at the National Europe Centre

The Australian National University, 1 Liversidge Street [67C]

Parking available in Balmain Lane, opposite University House. Light refreshments will be served after the seminar.

The onset of the Cold War used to be linked to Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain speech at Fulton, Missouri in March 1946. Despite Churchill's powerful anti-Soviet rhetoric, which was designed principally to stampede Congress into ratifying a loan for Britain, the pivotal relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States remained one of uneasy *détente* for at least another year. It was not until Truman sought in March 1947 to raise his domestic political standing by proclaiming the United States as the defender of the 'free world' that an ideological permafrost began to settle over East-West relations.

Truman's uncharacteristic resort to Churchillian hyperbole was not a response to aggression by the Soviet Union, which had been on its best international behaviour in the early months of 1947. The President's purpose was, rather like that of Churchill a year earlier, to persuade an increasingly tight-fisted Congress to disgorge funds – in this case for an image-enhancing American military intervention in the Greek civil war. This conflict had not been orchestrated by Stalin, who had sedulously distanced himself from Greek affairs since October 1944 in return for being granted a free hand in Rumania. On the contrary, as we shall see, it had been escalated largely by Churchill's adventurist deployment of British troops in Athens following the withdrawal of the German army of occupation.

This paper will argue that by propelling the United States into the Greek civil war, and thereby transforming it into a major watershed of the Cold War, Truman was succumbing to what may be characterised as the Dardanelles syndrome, to which Churchill resorted so famously in 1915, and again in Greece in 1944–45. This syndrome, which has been, and remains, a wellspring of human suffering and international disorder may be tentatively defined as the propensity of domestically or externally beleaguered politicians to launch diversionary, geopolitically quixotic and strategically counter-indicated military adventures.

Bruce Kent, a graduate of Melbourne, Oxford and the Australian National University, is a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the National Europe Centre. He is a student of Modern Western European History from 1789 to the present and is currently researching the dynamics of post-war reconstruction. He is working on a manuscript entitled *The Price of Peace*, which challenges teleological explanations of the onset of the Cold War as a steadily escalating strategic/ideological confrontation.

Please forward this invitation to anyone who may be interested.

RSVP: europe@anu.edu.au

Enquiries: -T: 02 6125 9896

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